ELL Reader

Genre	Build Background	Access Content	Extend Language
Realistic Fiction	• Citizenship • Butterflies • Different Generations • Kindness	• Captions • Labels • Definitions	• Plant Names

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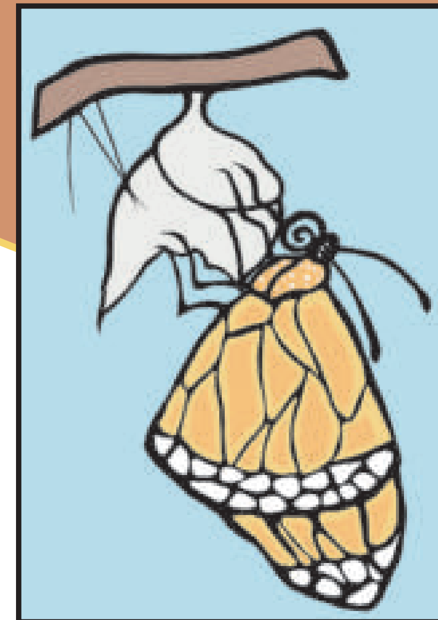
Butterfly Garden



by Grace McMurphy
Illustrated by Madoka Yamakawa



Butterfly Garden

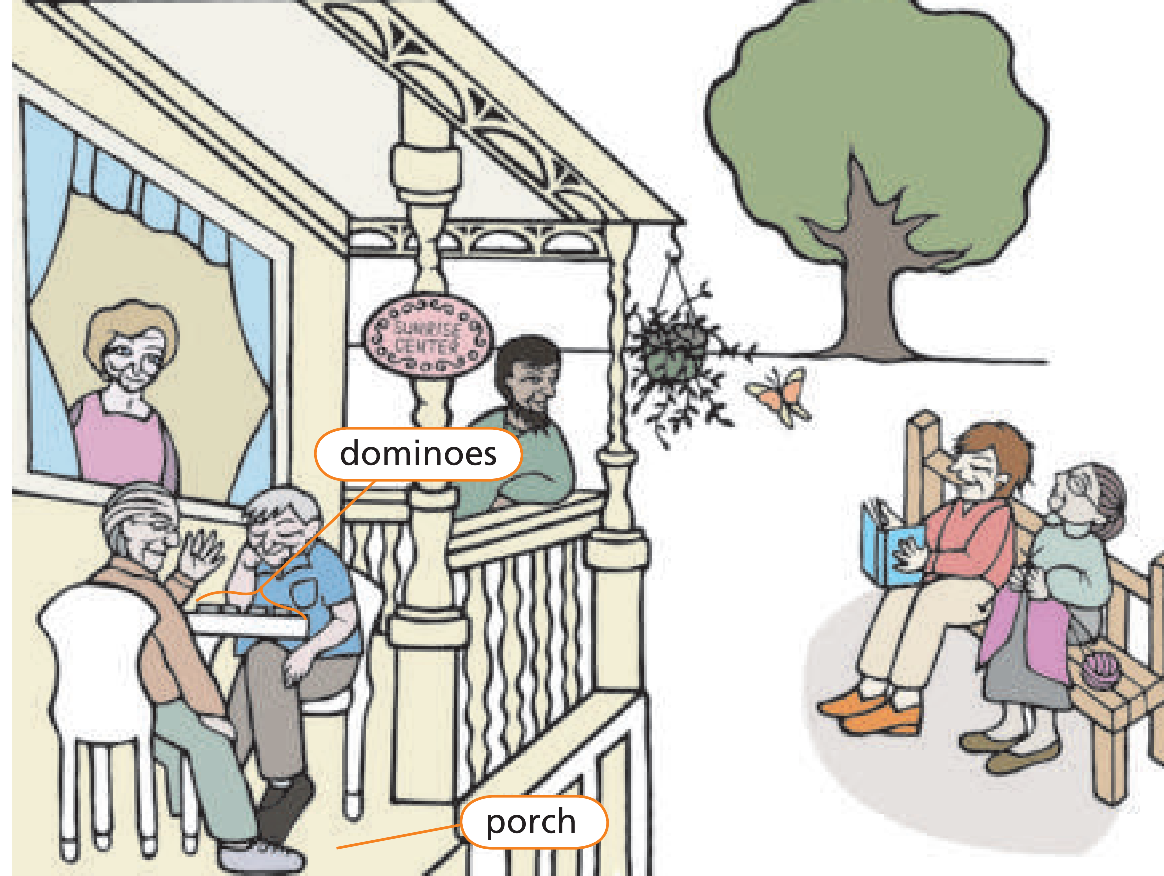


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Yolanda, Devon, and Dawn entered their classroom ready to begin another week at Greenville School. Today, groups of students would present ideas on how the class could help improve Greenville. Yolanda, Devon, and Dawn presented their idea to the class and to their teacher, Ms. Wallace.

"I think it would be fun to get our class involved with the senior citizens at the Sunrise Center," Yolanda announced to the class.

"My grandfather always had great stories, and I learned so much from him," Devon added. "We can learn things from the people at the Center."

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senior citizens: persons over the age of retirement





"We walk by the Center every day," said Dawn, "and I think it's time to meet our neighbors! Getting involved in the community benefits everyone."

The class and Ms. Wallace agreed. It was time to meet their neighbors. The Sunrise Center was an activity center attended by many senior citizens in the area. On sunny afternoons, the students often saw seniors gathered on the porch. Some played games such as dominoes and chess while others talked or listened to music.

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community: people living in a town or neighborhood



blueberry bush
blueberry
marigold



When the students arrived for their first visit, they were nervous, but the seniors at the Sunrise Center were excited. They had prepared cookies and punch for the students. It didn't take long before the entire center was buzzing. Everyone was talking in small groups, discussing what they do for fun, who their favorite basketball player is, and what kind of pizza is the best.

Then Ms. Wallace thanked the people of the Sunrise Center for their kindness. She also announced that the class wanted to help the center with a project. A group of seniors walked in front of the room and said they were planning a butterfly garden.

buzzing: humming with quiet but excited talk
punch: a drink made by mixing different juices plants grow



trumpet vine
milkweed
black-eyed susans



They would welcome the students' help. The garden would be planted in the front of the center so that everyone could enjoy the blooming flowers and the butterflies.

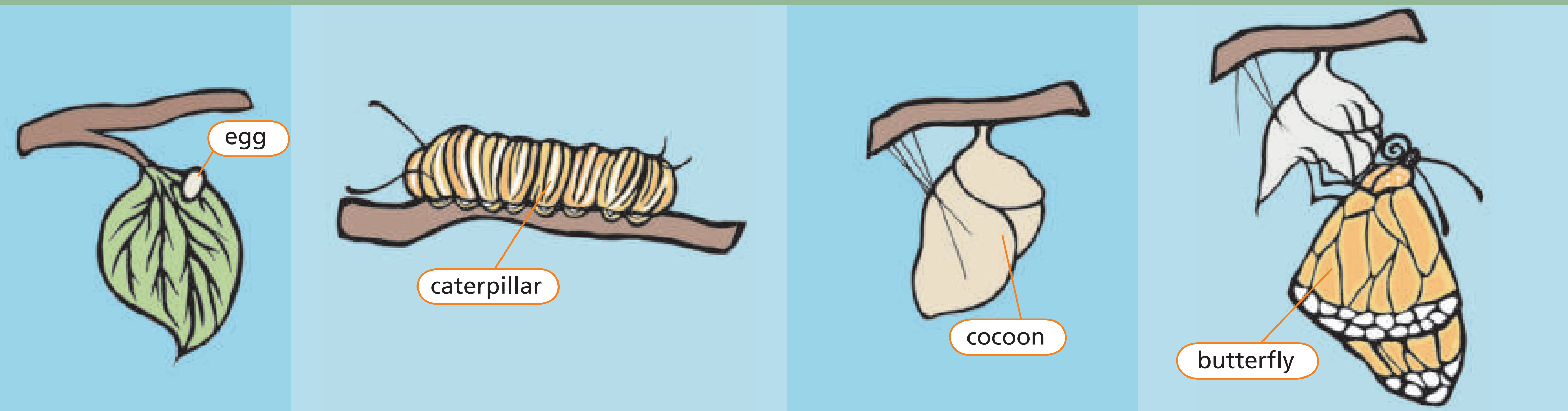
"What's a butterfly garden?" Devon asked.

"It's a flower garden, like other gardens, except the plants we choose will attract butterflies. Butterflies like special kinds of plants, so we need to find out which plants will work best in our area," answered the group leader. "Some of the plants will be tall; some will be short. We also have to have a mix of colors to attract the butterflies. So, would you like to help us?"

The class applauded, and soon the discussion was all about plants and butterflies.

attract: to catch their attention
applauded: clapped their hands





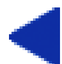

A butterfly goes through several cycles or stages during its life.

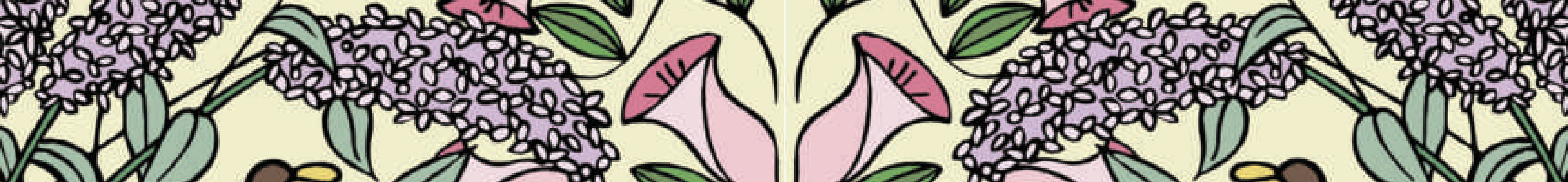

The Butterfly Band, as the students called themselves, began their project by reading gardening books. They learned which kinds of plants grow best in Greenville and which kinds of plants attract butterflies.

Dawn read about butterflies and learned about the growth cycle of a butterfly. The garden would need plants to help support the life cycle of a butterfly—the egg, the caterpillar, the cocoon, and finally the grown-up butterfly. When butterflies lay their eggs on plants, they choose a kind of plant the caterpillar will like to eat.


Dawn learned that the best plants for the caterpillar stage of the cycle are milkweed, dill, and parsley. However, when the butterfly leaves its cocoon, it prefers plants with nectar, or sugar. The best nectar-producing plants are butterfly bush, black-eyed Susans, marigolds, and trumpet vines.

Yolanda learned they would need a variety of plants that bloom at different times of the year. She learned that the different sizes and colors of plants are necessary in a butterfly garden to attract different kinds of butterflies. With more variety in the garden, the people would see a bigger selection of butterflies.





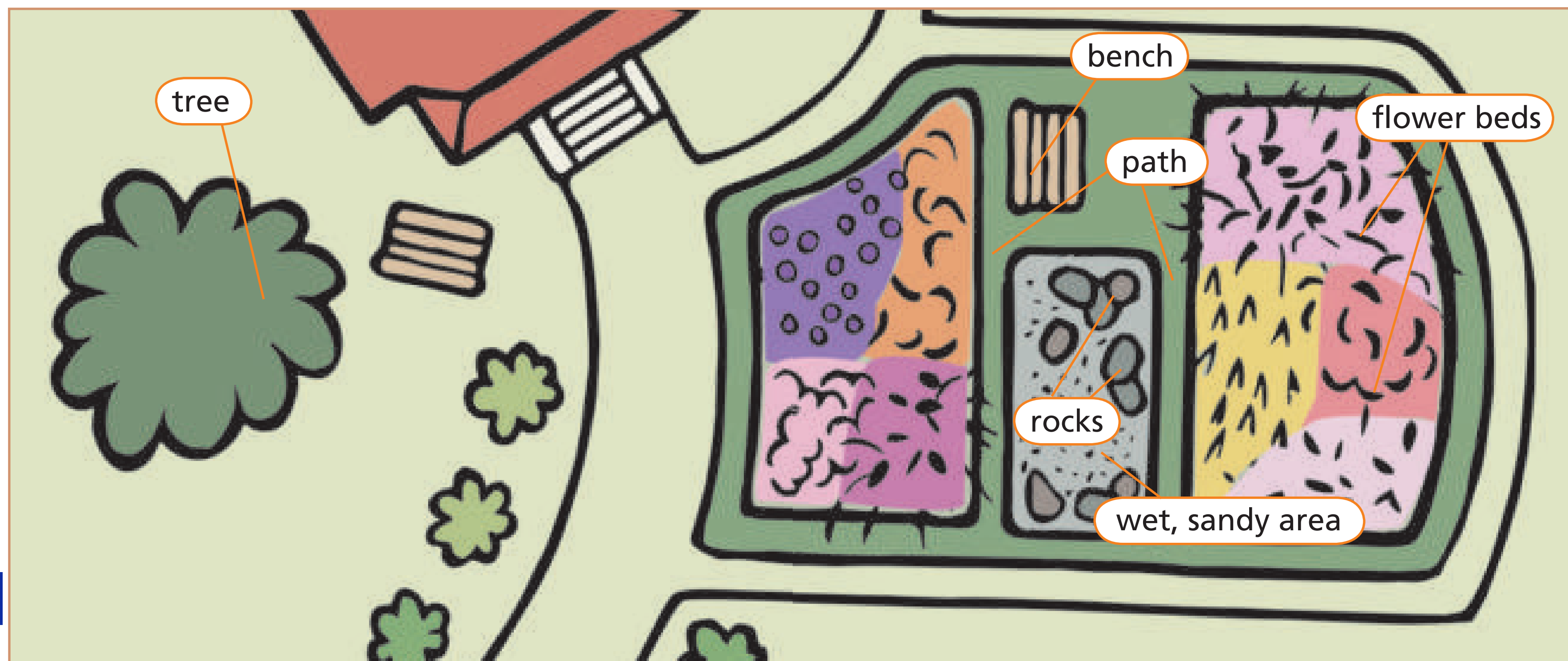
Devon read that butterflies are cold-blooded creatures, with blood about as warm or cool as the air around them. To stay warm, they like to rest on rocks in the sun and warm up their wings. He also learned that butterflies like mud puddles. They get their water from wet, sandy areas or from mud. Devon made sure everyone knew that the butterfly garden needed big, flat rocks and a wet, sandy area.



After the group shared all the information they learned, they sketched a diagram of their butterfly garden. The drawing included the areas where the different plants would get planted. It also included a path so that people could look after the new plants. The diagram showed the placement of the rocks, a sandy area, and a place for a bench. The bench was for the people who wanted to watch the butterflies. Yolanda, Devon, and Dawn couldn't wait to get started.



Diagram of the butterfly garden







There was much work to be done to get the garden started! The students and the seniors prepared the paths and garden beds. Yolanda and Dawn learned a lot from the people who grew up on farms. They taught the girls that the dirt had to be plowed and turned over. It was important to make sure the dirt was loose, not compact, and that it had plenty of nutrients. This could be done by adding natural fertilizer to the dirt. Yolanda and Dawn never realized until then that gardening was hard, physical work!

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nutrients: substances needed by living things for growth

fertilizer: material spread on the soil to help plants grow





Devon liked working on the project, and he was happy that he had made a new friend, Mr. Wright. Mr. Wright helped Devon search the river banks for flat rocks and helped him prepare the wet, sandy area. Devon was very careful about where the butterfly rocks should be placed. When Devon was not worrying about his rocks, he was playing games of checkers with Mr. Wright.

The planning and planting did not take long with everyone working together. The most difficult part was waiting for the plants to grow and to start flowering.



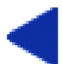






After several months, the small plants finally turned into flowering shrubs. When the first butterflies arrived, the Butterfly Band was excited! They decided to keep a journal to identify the butterflies they saw. Some residents wrote butterfly poems, and Dawn drew some beautiful pictures.

The Sunrise Center became the center of activity in the neighborhood. Yolanda, Devon, and Dawn were happy that they were good neighbors. They also took pride in making their community more pleasant. Everyone enjoyed the garden, and the beautiful plants made the morning walk to school more enjoyable. Of course, the best part about the butterfly garden was just sitting in the garden and watching the butterflies.





Talk About It

1. Why did Yolanda, Devon, and Dawn want to get involved with the senior citizens at the Sunrise Center?
2. How are the senior citizens at the Sunrise Center similar to the students at Greenville School? How are they different?

Write About It

3. Make a chart on a separate paper to write about how you or your class can improve your community.

What We Can Do	How We Can Do It

Extend Language

The names of plants often tell us something about the plants. For example, trumpet vines have flowers shaped like trumpets. What other plant names in this book tell

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